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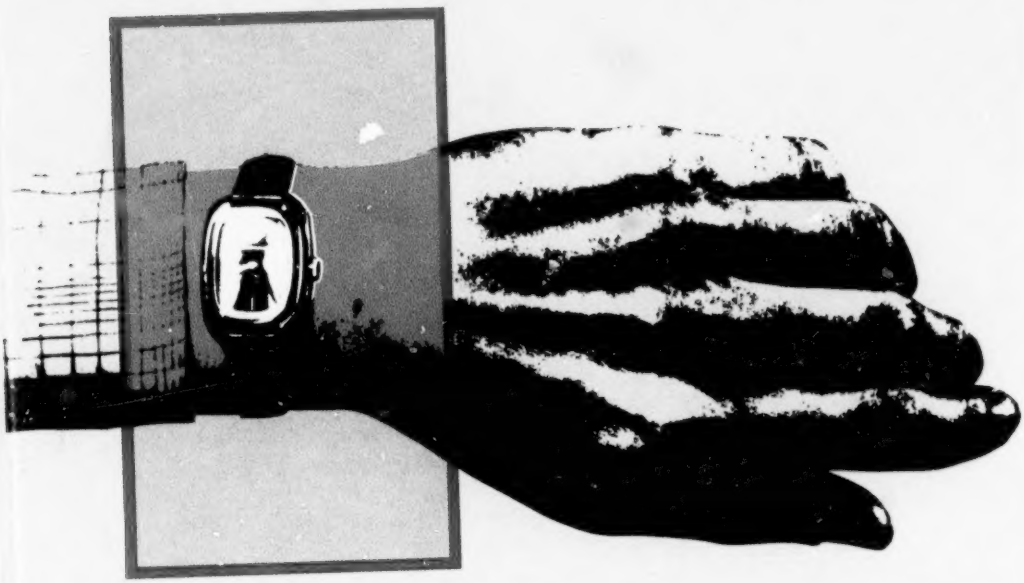

Designing Experiments in Use of Flexitime and Compressed Work Schedules

Information for State and Local Governments

152-140
February, 1981

PM 1.2:

Intergovernmental Personnel Programs

Under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) of 1970, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has a mandate to help improve personnel administration generally in state, local, and Indian tribal governments. Within OPM, the Office of Intergovernmental Personnel Programs, working in conjunction with the ten OPM regional offices, provides a range of supportive services under the IPA and other authorities.

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- Has the lead role in Federal efforts aimed at improving productivity in state and local governments.
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U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Intergovernmental Personnel Programs
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A series reporting personnel system developments, adapted from Federal models, of interest to State and local governments

Designing Experiments in Use of Flexitime and Compressed Work Schedules

Information for State and Local Governments

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Foreword

Improving the quality of working life and the productivity of public employees and service to the public are increasingly important concerns in the business of managing government. Public service managers are now keenly interested in innovative approaches to dealing with such problems as abuse of leave, tardiness, insufficient staff, and recruitment of scarce skill personnel.

Increasingly, alternative work schedules are being considered by public agencies and jurisdictions as a partial solution to staff problems. Considering the changes in American society which are affecting the workplace and workers, public managers should be aware of the possibilities for improving the quality of working life. By rearranging work hours to better meet employees' personal needs, an obstacle to employee job satisfaction is removed. Alternative work schedules—flexitime and compressed-workweek—change the standard five-day workweek to work patterns which in different ways allow employees to control their own hours of employment within certain limits.

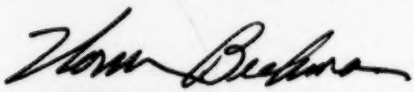
Many public agencies throughout the country are experimenting with various forms of alternative work schedules. There are numerous approaches which a public jurisdiction or agency can take to develop an alternative work schedule for its employees. Certain decisions regarding the approach have to be made. In general, there is no right answer for any particular jurisdiction or agency so that a period of experimentation and trial frequently is the best way to determine what practices to adopt.

In the Federal government, the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-390) allows Federal agencies to experiment with two basic alternatives to the traditional five-day workweek. Congress passed the law because it felt that new trends in the usage of flexible work hours, four-day workweeks, and other variations in work schedules showed sufficient promise to

warrant experimentation in the Federal sector. Although existing experience with flexible and compressed work schedules suggests that the benefits outweigh any costs and disadvantages, President Carter noted when signing the Act that "These schedules have not yet been tested within the full range of environments that characterize the Federal employment." The purpose of the experiments authorized by Congress is to test and evaluate whether, and in which situations, alternative work schedules can be successfully used by Federal agencies. The United States Office of Personnel Management is developing guidance to assist Federal agencies in meeting the requirements of the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act of 1978.

This guide is for those in State and local governments who are or will be involved in the design of experiments to determine whether or not the use of flexitime and compressed work schedules would be advantageous in their jurisdictions. It may be used by executives who need to familiarize themselves with all the factors that can be involved when considering whether or not to adopt an alternative work schedule. Then, if a decision is made to adopt such a schedule on a trial basis, the guide can be used by the planning group or coordinator to assure that all necessary steps have been taken for a successful experiment. The guide is based on materials developed by the Office of Personnel Management's Compensation Group, Alternative Work Schedules Experimental Program. The major work was done by James Evans. Modification of the material for state and local audiences was done by Lawrence Greene.

We hope you will find our guidance on this subject useful. If you have any comments on the content of this publication, you are cordially invited to communicate them to us. A self addressed mailer is provided for this purpose.



Norman Beckman
Assistant Director for
Intergovernmental Personnel Programs

Part I

Introduction

Background

Flexitime is a work scheduling concept that originated in Germany in 1967. In 1971 the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles experimented with flexitime to help employees avoid peak hour traffic when the Department moved to a congested area in downtown Albany. The experiment was successful and the flexitime program eventually became permanently incorporated into the Department's attendance rules.

The pioneers of the compressed workweek—that is expanding the daily hours of work while reducing the number of workdays—have generally been small, nonunion, nonurban manufacturing, service and retail companies. More recently this idea has spread to urban organizations such as large hospitals and municipal agencies.

In 1978, the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act of 1978 was passed allowing Federal agencies to experiment with both the flexitime concept and the compressed workweek. Rather than adopting these changes on a large scale basis immediately the Federal government has chosen to experiment within individual agency settings and then evaluate this experience before more general utilization of alternative work schedules.

Definitions

Before looking at the experimentation process some definitions are vital to understanding alternative work schedules:

Basic Work Requirement: The total number of hours which an employee is required to work or be in a leave status within a specified time period (e.g., 8 hours a day, 40

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hours a week, or 80 hours per pay period for full-time employees).

Compressed Work Schedule: Work schedules that allow employees to complete the basic work requirement in less than the usual five workdays a week or ten workdays in a biweekly pay period.

Flexible Work Schedule: Those work schedules which offer employees the choice, within limits, to vary their arrival and departure times from work, often called "flexitime." Fixed working hours are replaced with two types of time:

Core time—designated period or periods of time within a workday (or workweek) during which all employees must be on duty or be in leave status.

Flexible time—those hours outside core time, but within the scheduled working hours, that employees elect to work so as to vary their arrival/departure times.

(Note: Flexibility within the 40-hour week or biweekly pay period may involve the use of "credit hours.")

Credit Hours—those hours which an employee elects to work in excess of the basic work requirement in order to shorten a subsequent workday or workweek. A limit is usually set on the number of credit hours which can be carried over from one pay period to the next.

Overtime: Any hours which are in excess of the basic work requirement and which are ordered in advance by management.

Part II

How to Get Your Experiment Started

Feasibility Study

Careful planning is essential, and the first step in that planning should be a feasibility study to determine if alternative work schedules are applicable to your organization. In a large organization, a committee chaired by a Project Leader may be appointed to look at this question. The committee should include line managers. If an employee union exists, it should be represented on the committee. If there is no employee union, some employee representation from another source would be appropriate. First-line supervisors, in particular, should be included since their support is absolutely essential to successful implementation of an alternative work schedule.

A small agency or work unit, or one with most of its employees working in only a few occupational areas may be able to accomplish the feasibility, planning and implementation steps without setting up a committee framework. One or several people may be able to handle the project, *but communications with and input from managers, supervisors, employee unions and employee groups is imperative.* A lack of communication can only lead to serious problems once the project is implemented.

The exact character of a feasibility study will differ from organization to organization. There will, however, be less variation in feasibility studies than in planning and implementation efforts. Broadly, four things must be done in the feasibility study before meaningful recommendations can be made concerning the applicability of alternative work schedules to your work environment. They are: 1) assure that the committee understands the alternative work schedules con-

cept, 2) establish a clear idea as to your desired accomplishments (the introduction of an alternative work schedule may be considered as a remedy for a specific problem, such as traffic congestion during rush hours, or it may be of a more general nature such as improving employee morale or the operational effectiveness of the organization, expanding the hours of service to the public, or increasing the opportunity for contacts with other agencies), 3) perform an objective organizational analysis, and 4) provide for comprehensive communications with individual employees, employee groups, and any other affected groups.

Once a decision has been made to undertake a feasibility study, these steps should be followed:

1. Appoint a Project Leader (chairs the Feasibility and Planning Committees).
2. Appoint a Feasibility Committee (representatives should come from all major components of the organization; also, include line managers, first-line supervisors, union representatives, or if no union exists, employee representatives).
3. Meet with unions to discuss the feasibility study and gain their input. (Special attention should be given to provisions relating to issues which are subject to negotiation and any agreement provisions relating to hours of work.)
4. Undertake fact-finding and data gathering about alternative work schedules.
5. Inform managers, supervisors, and employees about the feasibility study.
6. Organize the Feasibility Committee into subcommittees and undertake the following activities:
   a. identify possible goals and objectives for the Alternate Work Schedules experiment;
   b. undertake a thorough organizational analysis. Consider the following:
      i. describe the work force through preparation of a staffing document. Include by organization component: total number of employees, number and kinds of jobs; number of non-supervisory workers; number of supervisors.
      ii. evaluate the impact on supervisors. Special consideration should be given to the number and availability of supervisors to cover expanded working hours

in organizations converting to flexitime where it is deemed necessary to have continuous supervisory coverage of employees.

iii. examine workload periods involving influx of outside calls, mail, and person-to-person contact with the public or other agencies. Identify interdependency among sections or individual employees.

iv. for flexitime, identify the degree of flexibility which might be possible for each organizational component and each position. Identify employees whose use of flexitime may need to be restricted.

c. identify possible alternative schedules which may be tested (see part III, Reference Materials, for ideas).

d. develop or acquire survey instruments to determine interest of employees and supervisors in testing an alternative work schedule. (See Part III, Sections C and D).

e. identify other possible impact areas, e.g., effect on other segments of the organization; effects on services e.g., building security, elevator and building maintenance functions, emergency medical services, cafeteria services effect on external communications; effect on utility costs.

f. if the organization is large enough to affect mass transit facilities, identify changes required to insure best service.

g. check on special traffic light timing or special police service, if access to worksite is affected.

7. Survey employees and supervisors as to interest in testing an alternative work schedule and to get other attitudinal data.
8. Analyze survey findings.
9. Based on survey findings and reports of subcommittees, the Committee should make recommendations concerning the feasibility and desirability of testing an alternative work schedule and if the recommendation is affirmative, the type of schedule recommended.

If the recommendation of the feasibility study committee is to experiment with alternative work schedules, you need to begin work on the actual planning and implementation stages. Although these stages are not always separate and may

overlap, we have treated them separately for the sake of clarity.

Planning Your Experiment

Once a decision has been made to experiment with an alternative work schedule, detailed plans should be made to implement the experiment. The method of evaluating results must be determined and machinery developed in the work unit to collect the data needed for evaluation before the experiment begins. Development of an implementation plan will be very important.

Depending on the jurisdiction, the purpose of the experiment may be to assess the impact of an alternative work schedule on one or all of the following: the efficiency of operations, service to the public, mass transit facilities, energy consumption, full and part-time employment opportunities, and the family life of employees. Here are comprehensive steps for planning the experiment, once a decision has been made that a particular alternative work schedule will be adopted:

1. Notify all interested parties including the merit system, budget office, etc., of your intention to experiment with an alternative work schedule.
2. Appoint a Research Coordinator, who:
   a. Serves as a member of the Planning Committee.
   b. Insures that the data are collected and analyzed; maintains a diary of significant events which may have an impact on data generated (e.g., a flu epidemic with its impact on usage of sick leave).
3. Establish a Planning Committee (the core of the Committee should be those who served on the Feasibility Committee, or this group may be expanded to include more first-line supervisors, who play a key role in implementation of alternative work schedules).
4. The Committee should consider the following issues and undertake the following activities:
   a. enter into consultation or negotiations, as appropriate, with any unions;
   b. set a committee meeting schedule and milestones to be reached;

c. define the goals and objectives of the alternative work schedules program;
d. specify the appropriate ground rules for the type of alternative work schedule to be tested;
e. determine the type of time accounting system to be used (primarily applicable to flexitime experiments);
f. set a target date for implementation (in order to have an adequate base of experience to evaluate, the duration of the experimentation period should be at least 18 months).

5. Develop appropriate research instruments such as questionnaires and data collection forms.
6. Identify data sources and establish data collection procedures.
7. Collect base line data under the present work schedule.
8. Based on the projected impact of change in the work schedule on building services, machines, and other factors, establish new procedures, if necessary (e.g., extension of hours of health unit, phone answering procedures, establishment of new car pools, etc.).
9. Pull together information and materials from each subcommittee and begin process of developing an employee handbook or informational publication.
10. Design new work schedules and hold for implementation date.
11. Provide necessary training, including cross training, as a result of schedule changes.
12. Hold sessions with managers and supervisors to explain the experiment, evaluation procedures, new work schedules, ground rules, etc.
13. Hold sessions with employees to explain the experiment, evaluation procedures, new work schedules, ground rules, etc.

Implementation

1. General

Data Requirements for Experimental Program
In order to determine the impact of alternate work schedules, work is needed in six specific areas.

- efficiency of government operations,
- service to the public
- utilization of mass transit facilities
- energy consumption
- full-time and part-time employment opportunities
- the family life of employees

Most of the data required for purposes of evaluating these impacts is already kept by many agencies. All personal data collected should be treated in a confidential manner, i.e., only aggregate data should be publicized. Results of the experiment can be reported as scores aggregated across work units and organizations.

Experimental Studies. More specifically the following types of data should be collected from all work units experimenting with alternative work schedules:

a. *Organization Characteristics*. Data needs include:
   - number of employees in the experimental work unit by age, sex, grade, job title
   - pre-experimental work schedules and alternative work schedules.
   - major activities of experimental work units e.g., clerical, produce goods, customer contact, etc.
   - labor union representation
   - car pool programs and parking facilities
   - availability of public transportation to organization.

b. *Longitudinal Data*.
   A useful approach is to compile data from existing records for the twelve months prior to the start of the experimental period and throughout the 18 months of the experiment. Organizations should obtain as much of the longitudinal data as possible from records for the 12-month period preceding the experiment. Data collection procedures should be established to record information during the experimental period which is not routinely maintained. Data should be collected on a monthly basis in each work unit. Data needed include the following:
   - productivity measures currently collected by the organization
   - turnover

- sick leave, annual leave and leave without pay usage (total number of hours per month and number of incidents of leave use per month)
- tardiness
- number of authorized overtime hours
- part time/full time employee ratio
- accident rates
- number of labor grievances concerning work hours
- labor costs
- any available utility costs
- applicants/job openings ratio.

c. *Employee Survey.*
Some attitudinal data and information on commuting habits, etc., can be collected only from surveys of employees in the experimental work units. In a typical alternative work schedule experiment such surveys will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour to complete. It would be administered four times: prior to the start of the experimental period, 3 months, 12 months, and 18 months into the experimental period. Collection of data on the following areas would be needed:

- organizational climate
- commuting habits
- impact on family and personal life
- job performance
- job satisfaction
- time utilization
- alternative work schedules utilization
- perceived abuses of system
- supervisor's functions
- scheduling

d. *Diary of Significant Events.*
It would be useful for the Research Coordinator to keep a diary of significant events within the organization which might have an impact on the effects of alternative work schedules utilization. Examples of such events might include a move to a new building, a flu epidemic, a change in supervisors (including top level management), changes in work flow, major snow storms, reorganization, or a critical energy shortage.

e. *Special Case Studies.*
Because certain, limited types of data may be difficult to obtain on an overall, cross-sectional basis, and because some results may be manifest only in the pres-

ence of special factors, some effects of the use of alternative work schedules can be determined only through special case studies.

2. Time Accounting under Alternative Work Schedules

Laws and regulations in public jurisdictions require that agencies keep records of all employees' time and attendance on the job. There are, however, several different ways to do so, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. The most common methods are discussed briefly below, but bear in mind that other methods may be possible and worth consideration.

a. Sign in/out sheets: This approach requires employees to record their arrival and departure times on paper each day. This is cheap and efficient for large groups of employees, since several sheets can be used simultaneously.
b. Individual employee time-keeping is also a much used alternative. This simply requires employees to keep their own records and certify as to their accuracy.
c. Time clocks: These instruments record arrival and departure times on a punch card. This is a relatively expensive method but may be cost effective for large numbers of employees. Employee unions traditionally oppose the use of time clocks, as well as many professional staff.
d. Time accumulators: These instruments record elapsed time the employee is on duty. The equipment is relatively expensive and can handle a limited number of employees, but it appears less objectionable to unions and professional staff than time clocks.

It should be noted that no time accounting system is foolproof. Sophisticated systems appear only to generate more innovative techniques to falsify timekeeping. The best insurance against such abuse is for supervisors to establish mutual trust with their subordinates.

D. Summary.

Following are the principal steps, summarized, in planning for implementing an alternative work schedules experiment:

1. Appoint a Project Leader.

2. Establish a Feasibility Committee, chaired by the Project Leader.*
3. Feasibility Committee completes its study and makes recommendation concerning adoption of an alternative work schedule.
4. Appoint a Research Coordinator (member of Planning Committee).
5. Establish a Planning Committee, chaired by Project Leader.*
6. Planning Committee completes assigned tasks leading to implementation of an alternative work schedule.
7. Research Coordinator and Committee collect standardized data at times specified, collect non-standardized data, solve problems and maintain liaison with other interested organizations.

* *Feasibility and Planning Committees may be one committee.*

Part III

Reference Materials

Flexitime Models

It is important to keep in mind that the following examples are just that—examples. They are provided to illustrate possible schedules and are not intended to limit options which may be developed by organizations. In the following example, 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. represent the earliest and latest times an employee may work. The employee may select a starting time between 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.; however, all employees must be present between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and may take a 1/2 hour lunch break within this time period.

Flexitour/Modified Flexitour

Flexitour

- employee preselects starting time
- may select new schedule at time intervals provided by program design

Modified Flexitour

- same as above but schedule may be modified with prior notification and approval of supervisor

Customer Service Hours

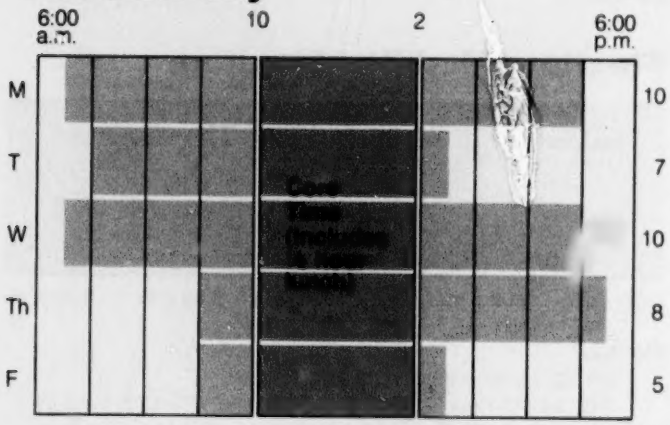
Gliding Schedule

- within flexible bands, employees may vary starting time without prior notification or approval of the supervisor

Modified Gliding Schedule

- 9-hour customer service band established
- employees may vary starting time but must insure minimum coverage level is maintained during customer service hours

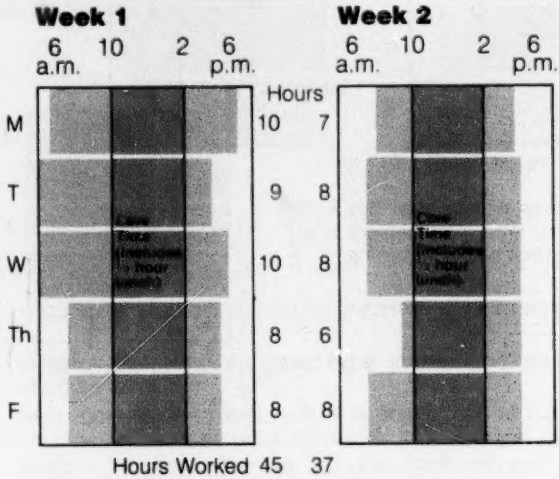
Variable Day



Total Hours Worked Weekly = 40

- employee may vary the length of the workday as long as he/she is present for core time within limits established by organization
- must work or account for the basic work requirement, e.g., 40 hours each week for a full-time employee
- credit hour carryover from one pay period to the next is limited to a maximum of 10 hours, or such lesser amount as set by the agency

Variable Week



Total Hours Worked Biweekly = 45 + 37 = 82
Basic Work Requirement = 80
credit hours remaining 2

- employee may vary the length of the day and the workweek as long as he/she is present for core time
- must work or account for the basic work requirement, e.g., 80 hours each biweekly pay period for a full-time employee
- credit hour accumulation for carryover to a succeeding pay period may be limited to an established maximum determined by the organization.

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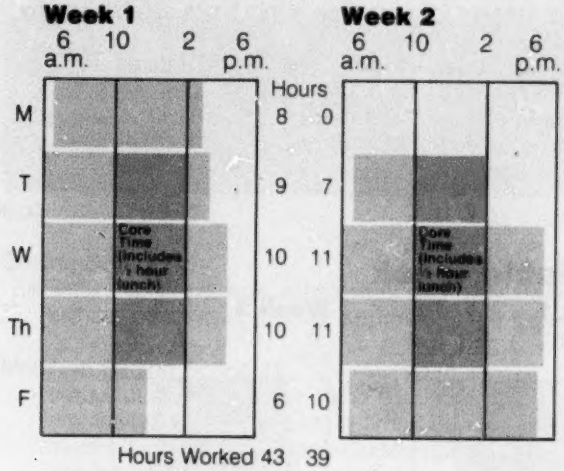
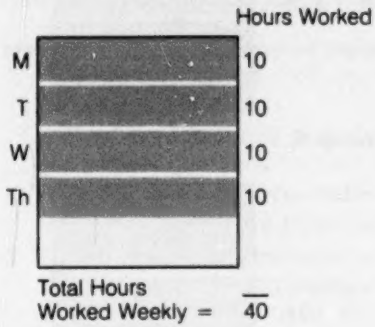


Total Hours Worked Biweekly = 82
Basic Work Requirement = 80
credit hours remaining 2

- employees must be present for core days as well as core hours
- basic work requirement is 80 hours each biweekly pay period
- credit hour accumulation is limited to an established maximum.

Compressed Work Schedules

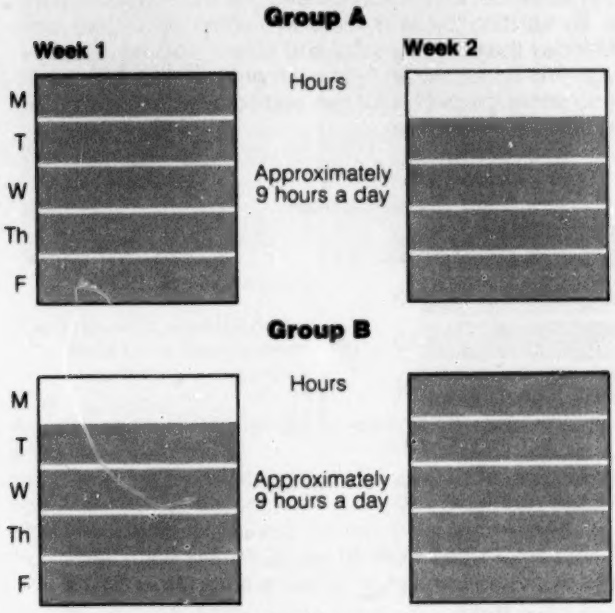
A compressed schedule is a work schedule which enables the full-time employee to complete the basic work requirement of 80 hours in less than 10 full work days in each biweekly pay period. For employees working under compressed schedules, overtime pay will continue to be paid for overtime hours which are officially ordered by an agency official in advance, and which exceed the basic work requirement. By splitting the work force with some employees working Monday through Thursday and others working Tuesday through Friday, as shown below, an organization can be open to serve the public for two additional hours each day when using a 4-day week.



- full-time employees work 40 hours, 4 days each week
- basic work requirement is 10 hours each day and 40 hours each week

The most common compressed schedule is the 4-day, 10-hour-a-day model. Obviously, Monday or any other day can be used as the new day off just as easily as Friday if there is a light workload on Mondays and a heavy one on Fridays. This model has the advantage of shorter days than the 3-day week, an important consideration when jobs involve using high speed machines or close attention to details.

The 5-4/9 Plan shown below allows half the work force a day off every other Monday. Again, the new day off can be Monday or another day depending on work load considerations. All workdays are usually about 9 hours long, and each full-time employee works 5 days one week, 4 days the next week.



Total Hours Worked Biweekly, Group A = 80
Total Hours Worked Biweekly, Group B = 80

Sample

Supervisor Feasibility Study Survey Form

To be distributed to all supervisors in the office of _____

We are interested in your input concerning the possible impact and feasibility of using either flexible workhours or a compressed work schedule (enter type of schedule under consideration) in your organization. Prior to completing the attached form, attention should be given to the following *questions which may be important factors in your evaluation.* An objective examination must be made to determine the possible positive and negative effects of (enter type of compressed schedule) on agency operations.

Nature and frequency of outside contact

1. How many telephone calls are received each day?
   Who receives them?
   Is there more than one person in your organization who can answer questions on most phone inquiries?
   How critical is it that answers be given immediately?
2. How many visitors are there each day?
3. Do any of your staff members attend meetings outside of the office or the agency which are fixed and recurring?
   If yes, when are they held?
4. Are calls and visitors fairly evenly distributed throughout the day?
   Can you predict peak workloads either by day, week, month or season of the year?
5. Are there outside factors, over which you have little or no control, which influence your workload?

Nature of internal contacts and projects

1. Do most of your professional staff members operate on a project basis?
   Do they work independently or does their work require substantial interaction with other staff members? Within the agency? Within the office?
2. Are they able to control the inflow or outflow of calls and visitors?

3. Are professional staff in need of training before they would be capable of operating alone?
4. Is there at least one professional staff member who is able to serve as acting supervisor in your absence?
5. Will alternative work scheduling cause security problems relative to any materials or documents in your office?

Sample

Supervisor Feasibility Study Survey Form

Do not try to complete the information requested below before obtaining an understanding of the concept of alternative work schedules and reviewing the attached guidelines.

1. Title of functional area (i.e., branch, section, unit, etc.)

2. Brief statement of functional area mission

3. Number of positions by title, grade and series

4. Describe those functions which cannot be adequately accomplished under a system of flexible or compressed working hours. Explain restrictions which prevent these functions from being carried out under each system.

5. Number of positions by series and title which perform the functions described under item 4, if any

6. If your office can operate on a compressed schedule, which day(s) would be best used as the new day(s) off?

7. If (indicate a flexible schedule) is feasible within your organization, state the minimum number of hours of core time and the specific hours of core time necessary, if any, for effective performance of your functions. For example, are you required to communicate with different time zones or different agencies at a designated time on a recurring basis?

8. General advantages of the (indicate a flexible or compressed schedule) concept for your organization.

9. General disadvantages of the (indicate the flexible or compressed schedule) concept for your organization.

10. Current method of measuring productivity, if any.

11. Other comments or considerations not included above.

Other comments or considerations (cont'd.)

Supervisor's Signature

Work Unit Supervised

Sample

Employee Feasibility Study Survey Questions

Place an "X" on the appropriate line to answer each question or statement.

1. General Information/Starting Times.

   A. Given the option, would you prefer to begin work at a time other than your present schedule? _____yes _____no

   B. Given a choice, would you work longer hours to shorten your workweek? _____yes _____no

   C. Place an "X" on ONLY ONE LINE next to the starting time which you think you would select *most* frequently if Flexitime were introduced

a.m.	a.m.	a.m.	a.m.
_____ 6:00	_____ 7:00	_____ 8:00	_____ 9:00
_____ 6:15	_____ 7:15	_____ 8:15	_____ 9:15
_____ 6:30	_____ 7:30	_____ 8:30	_____ 9:30
_____ 6:45	_____ 7:45	_____ 8:45	

2. Transportation.

	Circle one	
A. Do you use public transportation traveling to and from work?	yes	no
B. Would you use public transportation if public transit schedules and your preferred work schedule could be matched?	yes	no

C Are you presently in a car pool? yes no

D. If possible, would you be a car pool member if (indicate appropriate schedule) were adopted? yes no

E. Do you drive to work by yourself? yes no

F. Would you drive to work by yourself if (indicate appropriate schedule) were adopted? yes no

3. Cafeteria.

A. Do you eat breakfast three or more times per week in the building cafeteria? yes no

B. Would you do so under (indicate appropriate schedule)? yes no

4. Compressed Schedule Questions

A. Would you be willing to work from ____ a.m. to ____ p.m. ____ days a week? (indicate appropriate compressed schedule) ____ yes ____ no.

B. Which day(s) of the week (Mon. - Fri.) would you want to be off if we go to a (indicate appropriate compressed schedule)?

____ Mon. ____ Tues. ____ Wed. ____ Thurs. ____ Fri.

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